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FM THE SITUATION ROOM

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

~~SECRET~~ SENSITIVE EYES ONLY VIA MARTIN CHANNELS WH50417

MARCH 13, 1975

FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE

TO: AMERICAN EMBASSY SAIGON

EYES ONLY FOR CHARGE LEHMANN FROM AMBASSADOR MARTIN

1. IT MAY BE USEFUL FOR PRESIDENT THIEU'S MORALE, DURING THE FLOOD OF NEWS OF CONGRESSIONAL REVERSES ON CAMBODIAN AID, TO RECEIVE DIRECTLY FROM ME MY PERSONAL APPRECIATION OF THE STATE OF PLAY IN WASHINGTON. WILL YOU PLEASE REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND PERSONALLY DELIVER TO HIM THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE. IF GENERAL QUANG OR OTHERS SUGGEST THE MESSAGE BE RELAYED THROUGH THEM, YOU ARE TO POLITELY REFUSE SAYING YOUR INSTRUCTIONS ARE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT. WITHIN MISSION, MAKE CONTENT KNOWN ONLY TO TOM POLGAR AND JOE BENNETT.

2. TEXT FOLLOWS:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

READING THE RECENT NEWS FROM WASHINGTON REGARDING CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON INDOCHINA AID MUST GIVE YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES IN THE GOVERNMENT A FEELING OF DISCOURAGEMENT ABOUT THE CONSTANCY OF AMERICAN POLICY. THE NEWS FROM PHNOM PENH IS INDEED RATHER BAD AND CONTRIBUTES TO A CONGRESSIONAL SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS THAT FUTURE AID WOULD REALLY CHANGE THE COURSE OF EVENTS. ALTHOUGH THE ADMINISTRATION WILL STILL PERSEVERE IN ITS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AID FOR CAMBODIA, IT NOW SEEMS QUITE LIKELY IT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH, ALTHOUGH I DO NOT PERSONALLY EXPECT

***** WHSR COMMENT *****

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By let, NARA, Date 1/6/00

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PHNOM PENH TO FALL IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

WHAT WILL BE DAMAGING TO VIETNAM WILL BE THE TENDENCY OF THE CONGRESS TO DRAW PARALLELS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM. TO LESSEN THIS TENDENCY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE I DO NOT WANT THE \$300 MILLION SUPPLEMENTAL TO COME TO A VOTE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE CONGRESS WILL BE TAKING A RECESS OVER EASTER BEGINNING MARCH 21 TO APRIL 6. IN THE MEANTIME, ALL OF US HERE WILL BE QUIETLY WORKING TO OBTAIN A PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING THAT VIETNAM IS QUITE DIFFERENT AND IS QUITE ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF ITSELF, IF WE GIVE IT THE AID WE PROMISED WE WOULD FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. I BELIEVE WE WILL MAKE SOME PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THIS UNDERSTANDING IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. YOUR INTERVIEW WITH THE JAPANESE NEWSMEN LAST WEEK WAS VERY GOOD. IT WOULD ALSO BE VERY USEFUL IF YOU COULD DIRECT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO PROVIDE AMBASSADOR PHONG WITH THE FUNDS WE DISCUSSED, ALTHOUGH YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD DIRECTED THIS BE DONE, I AM INFORMED AMBASSADOR PHONG HAS RECEIVED NOTHING.

AS I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE, I DO NOT BELIEVE THE AMERICANS ARE NOW REALLY QUALIFIED TO GIVE YOU MILITARY ADVICE. FOR ITS POLITICAL EFFECT, HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF THERE COULD BE AN OCCASION IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WHERE THE RVNAF HAD PUBLICLY GIVEN A SOUND BEATING TO NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES. THE POLITICAL REACTION HERE WOULD BE VERY GOOD IF THIS SHOULD OCCUR, PERHAPS THE FORTHCOMING BATTLES AROUND TAY NINH, OR ELSEWHERE IN MR. 3, WILL PROVIDE SUCH AN OCCASION.

THERE IS SOME FEAR EXPRESSED HERE THAT YOU MAY EXPEND TOO MUCH FORCE IN AN IMMEDIATE EFFORT TO RETAKE BAN ME THUOT. I HAVE SAID I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN YOUR MILITARY DECISIONS AND THAT, LIKE GENERAL GEORGE MARSHALL, YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO DESTROY THE ENEMY MAIN FORCE ELEMENTS AFTER WHICH YOU WILL TAKE BACK THOSE AREAS YOU CONSIDER VITAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM.

I DO HAVE ONE SUGGESTION. IT HAS BEEN MY IMPRESSION THAT GENERAL CAO VEIN IS VERY CAUTIOUS IN AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF MUNITIONS UNTIL NEW APPROPRIATIONS ARE FORTHCOMING. ORDINARILY, THAT WOULD BE A WISE AND PRUDENT COURSE, BUT IT WILL HELP TO GET THOSE APPROPRIATIONS IN ADEQUATE AMOUNTS IF THE RVNAF IS SEEN BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO BE NOT ONLY HOLDING WELL, BUT ALSO CLEARLY WINNING A FEW ENGAGEMENTS. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE MUNITIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING, BUT WE CAN GET THERE QUICKER AND IN LARGER AMOUNTS IF WE HAVE A FEW WELL-PUBLICIZED VICTORIES TO PRESENT AS EVIDENCE OF HOW WELL THE RVNAF



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CAN REALLY DO, IN THE PRESENT SITUATION A BIT OF A GAMBLE CAN PAY OFF VERY HANDSOMELY.

I ALSO SUGGEST THAT YOU INSTRUCT GENERAL QUANG AND GENERAL BINH IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO CHECK WITH MR. LEHMANN AND MR. POLGAR ABOUT THE EFFECT ON AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION OF ANY FUTURE ACTIONS SUCH AS THE RECENT ARRESTS OF THE JOURNALISTS. I DO NOT PRESUME TO SUGGEST WHAT YOUR FINAL DECISION SHOULD BE IN SUCH CASES, BUT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO HAVE OUR OPINION OF AMERICAN PUBLIC REACTION BEFORE YOU BEFORE THE FINAL DECISION IS MADE.

IT IS GOING TO BE A TOUGH TIME AHEAD ON THE BATTLE FRONT IN VIETNAM. VERY SOON, I AM SURE, THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT WILL AGREE WITH YOUR ASSESSMENT THAT WHAT YOU NOW CONFRONT IS INDEED A GENERAL OFFENSIVE WHOSE INTENSITY MAY WELL EXCEED THAT OF 1972. IT IS ALSO GOING TO BE A TOUGH TIME ON THE BATTLEFRONT IN WASHINGTON AND I BELIEVE I MAY SERVE THE COMMON INTERESTS OF BOTH OUR COUNTRIES BY STAYING HERE FOR A WHILE. I CAN GIVE YOU THE MOST CATEGORIC ASSURANCES THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE ARE DETERMINED THAT WHEN THE WASHINGTON BATTLE IS OVER YOU WILL HAVE THE RESOURCES YOU NEED. WITH THOSE I AM CERTAIN THE WILL AND DETERMINATION OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE TO REMAIN FREE WILL PREVAIL.

SHOULD YOU WISH TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME DIRECTLY, MR. LEHMANN CAN SEND ANY MESSAGE THROUGH THE TOTALLY SECURE CHANNELS PROVIDED BY THE WHITE HOUSE. WITH MY RESPECT, SINCERELY, GRAHAM MARTIN
END TEXT.

3. WARM REGARDS,
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